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ABSTRACT

An exploratory case study examined the distribution patterns and subsequent use of "Research within Reach: A Research Guided Response to Concerns of Reading Educators" in three states during the period October 1978 to February 1980. Copies of the book were distributed at regional conferences, state workshops, inservice workshops, and via direct mail. Techniques for choosing the purposive sample differed for each state, reflecting the rationale of describing the use of the book rather than evaluating the extent of its use. A total of 68 administrators, supervisors of reading programs, reading specialists, contact persons for statewide information services, school superintendents, principals, and faculty members of schools of education were interviewed. Tentative results indicated that (1) the primary users of the publication were persons with inservice responsibilities; (2) characteristics that positively influenced the use of the publication included its content, a sound research base, its question-and-answer format, and the fact that teachers were used as a source of questions to be answered by research; (3) the publication was perceived to be particularly helpful when the individual or the organization placed top priority on reading; (4) effective dissemination strategies included presentation at workshops whose recipients have inservice responsibilities, and introduction of the book by someone or some institution which the recipient values or trusts; and (5) non-interactive strategies (direct mail of unsolicited single copies) were the least productive. Future research should continue to focus on the relationship between dissemination strategies and use. (Several unnumbered tables of data are included.) (RS)

ED 367 945

A Case Study of Three States' Dissemination of Research Within Reach: A Research Guided Response to Concerns of Reading Educators

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A Collaborative Effort Among

The Regional Exchange at Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL/RX)
The Research & Development Interpretation Service (RDIS) at CEMREL, Inc.
The System Support Service (SSS) at Far West Laboratory

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INTRODUCTION

The Research and Development Exchange (RDx) is a nationwide project supported by the National Institute of Education, consisting of eight Regional Exchanges and four central support services. One of the goals of the RDx is to promote the use of R&D based knowledge to improve school practice. R&D based knowledge is voluminous and diffuse, and often exists in forms that are not usable by practitioners. For this reason, the RDx's Research and Development Interpretation Service (RDIS) has been charged with synthesizing and interpreting R&D based knowledge, then organizing such knowledge in forms readily usable by practitioners. The result has been a series called Research Within Reach (RWR).

The RWR series is being developed for two purposes: (1) to help teachers and administrators use research information in order to improve practices, and (2) to convey instructional concerns to researchers in order to influence future research. The series is unique because it first asks practitioners what they want to know and then consults research for the answers. Topics in the RWR series to-date include reading, elementary mathematics, secondary mathematics, and oral and written communication.

Research Within Reach: A Research Guided Response to Concerns of Reading Educators (RWR: Reading) is the first in the RWR series. Published in October 1978, RWR: Reading presents responses to twenty-four questions most frequently asked by a panel of fourteen teachers and administrators, together with the responses of a panel of five reading researchers. Responses are in the form of a discussion, a summary, and recommendations for further reading. Sections appearing in RWR: Reading are the nature of reading and instruction, reading readiness, developing reading skills, reading comprehension, and difficulties in developing reading skills.

Upon the document's publication, RDIS provided all Regional Exchanges with copies of RWR: Reading. The Regional Exchanges disseminated

the document to the clients (i.e., SEAs) in their region, who in some instances then passed the book on to others. In February 1980, Linda Reed of RDIS asked Regional Exchange at Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL/RX) for assistance in tracking the dissemination of RWR: Reading in the six states served by the SEDL/RX: Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

SEDL/RX agreed to provide detailed information about its dissemination patterns and assist RDIS in placing telephone calls; RDIS in turn would analyze and write up the results. In the fall of 1980, RDIS asked the Systems Support Service (SSS) of the RDx to undertake the study on its behalf, working with the SEDL/RX. Stanley Chow of SSS and Patricia Bourexis, under contract to SSS, joined RDIS and the SEDL/RX in the effort. SSS was responsible for the study design, instrument development, and the preparation of an initial single state case study. SEDL/RX reviewed the study design with SSS and shared in data collection efforts. SEDL/RX then collected comparable data from users from two additional states, analyzed these data, and synthesized these findings into this three-state case study. Thus, this report is the result of collaboration among RDIS, SSS and SEDL/RX, all representating the RDx network.

Special thanks are due to several SEDL/RX staff: to Martha Hartzog analyzing and writing up the data; to Jan Schechter for conducting most of the telephone interviews and providing insights pertinent to data analysis; to Nancy Baker Jones and Anna Penn Hundley for contacting SEDL/RX states for names of users and then reviewing the manuscript; and to Barbara L. Baylor for production of the finished copy.

Preston C. Kronkosky, Ph.D.
Director, SEDL/RX

DISSEMINATION OF RWR: READING

In order to understand how the case study was designed, it is necessary to look at how the book was disseminated. RWR: Reading was published by RDIS in October 1978. RDIS disseminated the document to reading researchers and to the Regional Exchanges in seven regional educational laboratories. The Regional Exchanges, in turn, assumed responsibility for disseminating the product to selected educators (usually SEAs) in the regions they serve; and some of these educators disseminated the book to a third tier of recipients.

The Regional Exchange at Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL/RX) received the copies in October 1978. During almost a year and a half, until February 1980, approximately 746 copies were distributed to educators in the SEDL/RX region, then comprising Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. To inaugurate dissemination of RWR: Reading, the SEDL/RX sponsored a regional conference based on the book. "R&D Speaks in Reading," held in November 1978, was attended by 15 SEA personnel, representing reading or language arts specialists from the region's five state departments of education, and by one Right to Read Coordinator from an intermediate service agency (ISA). All participants received a copy of the book.

Afterwards, a number of state-level workshops were held, patterned after the SEDL/RX conference. The ISA-based Right to Read Coordinator, who had attended "R&D Speaks in Reading," presented two workshops for local area teachers and administrators, one for 20 educators from Right to Read Schools, the other for 30 members of an area reading council (LEA). One SEA Right to Read Coordinator, who had attended the "R&D Speaks in Reading" conference, sponsored a workshop for the 20 state Right to Read Coordinators who are based in the state's intermediate

service agency network (ISA). The Follow Through Program at SEDL based several inservice workshops on RWR: Reading for approximately 70 elementary teachers in two of the region's states. Participants at these state workshops received a copy of the book, which the SEDL/RX provided the workshop sponsors.

In addition to sponsoring the regional conference and assisting with the state workshops, the SEDL/RX targeted distribution of single copies to its Advisory Board members, to the Right to Read Coordinators in three additional states in the region, and to the 20 ISA-based contacts for a statewide information service which is sponsored by the state's SEA. During the year and a half period, the SEDL/RX also responded to individual requests generated by advertisements in the Educational R&D Report, a state ISA newsletter, and word of mouth.

Finally, the SEDL/RX sent bulk batches of from 25 to 115 copies of RWR: Reading to the Advisory Board members in four of the states it serves, at their request. It also sent additional copies to the Advisory Board members, when requested, over the course of the year and a half period. The SEDL/RX Advisory Board consists of persons in charge of dissemination for the SEAs. They had the responsibility for distributing the bulk batches they requested from the SEDL/RX. In a cover letter accompanying the bulk batches, the SEDL/RX passed along RDIS' suggested list of recipients:

- State Title I Coordinators
- Superintendents of Major Urban School Districts
- Chief State School Officer
- NDN Facilitator
- Educational Foundations in the State
- Teacher Centers
- Educational Departments in Major Universities and Colleges
- State and Regional Library Networks

SEA Advisory Board members chose to distribute the bulk batches they received in various ways, the particular dissemination pattern and

audience differing by state. Recipients included school superintendents (LEA); deans of colleges of education in four year public and private institutions of higher education (IHE), SEA subject specialists, reading specialists, and heads of departments; as well as field-based personnel for an SEA reading program and a state Right to Read program. In addition, one SEA made the book part of inservice training for its state reading program.

The SEDL/RX requested, and in general received, distribution records from those to whom it sent bulk batches of the book; of course, as copies got farther and farther away from the original distribution point, they became more difficult to track. During the period October 1978 through February 1980, the following four broad categories of educators received copies of the book, either directly from the SEDL/RX, from an SEA, or from an IEA:

- SEA personnel

  Includes supervisors of SEA reading programs and English and language arts programs; SEA-based reading specialists; field-based reading specialists, field-based Right to Read personnel; heads of curriculum departments; heads of departments of dissemination; heads of vocational educational and elementary education departments.

- ISA personnel

  Includes reading specialists; contact persons for statewide information service; Right to Read coordinators.

- LEA personnel

  Includes school superintendents; principals, reading coordinators; reading specialists; staff development specialists; elementary teachers.

- IHE personnel

  Includes deans of colleges of education as well as other faculty members.

Dissemination strategies, as well as content and format, influence a book's use. During the period October 1978 through February 1980, the following dissemination strategies were used to distribute copies of RWR: Reading in the SEDL/RX region:

1. Regional Conference: "R&D Speaks in Reading," sponsored by the SEDL/RX.

2. State Workshops: sponsored by Right to Read Coordinators at the SEA and ISA levels and by the SEDL Follow Through Program, with the SEDL/RX providing copies of the books and limited technical assistance.

3. Inservice Workshops: presented, with explanation, by SEA or LEA coordinator or director as part of regular staff training.

4. Direct Mail: three kinds of direct mail took place--

   a. Solicited Bulk Batches: sent by the SEDL/RX to its SEA Advisory Board members and to selected SEA and ISA groups, at their request;

   b. Solicited Single or Limited Number of Copies: sent by the SEDL/RX or by the SEA in response to requests;

   c. Unsolicited Single Copies: sent by SEA to groups selected for potential interest.

Three states in the SEDL/RX region were selected for the study. They are identified as State 1, State 2, and State 3. As mentioned before, dissemination patterns proved slightly different for each state and influenced the sample taken from each. The "Case Study Sample" section describes the dissemination patterns in more detail. Findings and implications pertaining to the relationship between dissemination strategies and use, and pertaining to use itself, are discussed in the last two sections of the report.

CASE STUDY DESCRIPTION

Purpose and Goals

The purpose of the RWR: Reading case study in the SEDL/RX region is to increase knowledge of how practitioners use RWR synthesis products and, since method of dissemination appears to affect use, to increase knowledge of effective methods of dissemination. No attempt was made, however, to evaluate the extent of the book's use by educators.

The case study examines the distribution patterns and subsequent use of the document in three states during the period October 1978 to February 1980. Case study findings and implications will accomplish two goals: (1) help the RDIS improve the design of future RWR products and (2) help the regional exchanges develop more effective strategies for disseminating RWR products to educators.

Sample

To limit the scope of this exploratory case study, three states were chosen from the SEDL/RX region, identified in this study as State 1, State 2, and State 3. Though four broad types of educators received copies of the book, the LEA level was sub-divided into two (separating out teachers), making a total of five categories of educators:

1. SEA
2. ISA
3. LEA (administrators and reading specialists)
4. Teachers
5. IHE

In choosing the sample for each state, an attempt was made to look at different dissemination strategies. In addition, efforts were made to select those persons who would be likely to have used RWR: Reading. In other words, a purposive rather than a random sample was drawn. The rationale for doing so reflects the intent of the case study: to describe use of the document rather than evaluate extent of its use. The "Case Study Sample" section describes the actual sample for each state and illustrates how dissemination patterns, different for each state, determined in part the sample taken from each.

Data Collection

The data collection method was the telephone interview. An interview protocol was developed by the System Support Service (SSS) of the RDx, working with RDIS and the SEDL/RX. The protocol directs queries in three areas: (1) descriptions of the manner in which clients received the product; (2) descriptions of use of RWR: Reading by individual practitioners, as well as the organizations in which they work; (3) perceptions of clients on key attributes of the product which influenced its use. A copy of the protocol follows. The interviews were conducted by SSS and SEDL/RX between December 8, 1980 and February 28, 1981. All interviews were completed between 10 to 20 minutes, and most within 15 minutes.

SEDL

RWR Case Study

Interview Protocol

Items	Instruction and Probing Questions for Interviewer
1. Background. Please confirm our records Name: _____ Title: _____ Organization: _____ Address: _____ _____ _____ Phone Number: _____ Responsibility: _____ _____	Fill in item
2. Did you receive a copy of the book, Research Within Reach?	Check: yes ___ no ___ Terminate interview, if after probing to recall, the response is NO.
3. When did you first learn of Research Within Reach?	• When, where, how? • under what organizational context?
Items	Intructions and Probing Questions for Interviewer
4. Since you received the book, how have you used Research Within Reach?	• read the book to increase/ confirm knowledge about reading/research on reading • as a reference to respond to questions about reading • for ideas to teach reading to children • distribute book to others (specify) • develop pre- or inservice training for teachers/ reading specialists • consider/incorporate knowledge in RWR in local/state school improvement program or plan • other

5. I will mention several characteristics about RWR. Indicate if any of them influenced how you used the book.

- Did the content of the RWR influence your use of the book? Why/how? — yes ___ no ___ If yes, ask Why/how
- Did the presentation of the RWR (Q&A) influence your use of the book? Why/how? — yes ___ no ___ If yes, ask Why/how
- Did the timeliness of the book influence your use of it? Why/how? — yes ___ no ___ If yes, ask Why/how
- Did your experience and attitude about research influence your use of RWR? Why/how? — yes ___ no ___ If yes, ask Why/how
- Did the size of the book influence your use of RWR? Why/how? — yes ___ no ___ If yes, ask Why/how
- Did your knowledge of how the book was developed influence your use of RWR? Why/how? — yes ___ no ___ If yes, ask why/how
- Did the way you received the book, e.g., workshop, influence your use of it? Why/how? — yes ___ no ___ If yes, ask why/how
- What other characteristics influenced your use of RWR? Explain:

6. Has the use of RWR had any influence on your organization or people who work there? How?

- increased appreciation about research
- confirming reading/basic skills priorities
- design & operation of reading program
- inservice training program
- selection of reading texts
- other

7. Would you be willing to talk to us again about RWR or other products and services? yes ___ no ___

CASE STUDY SAMPLE

As previously explained, for purposes of the sample, teachers were separated out of the LEA category and placed in their own category. An attempt was made to sample different dissemination strategies as well, and to choose the sample, when possible, from the dominant dissemination strategies in each of the three states. Finally, attempts were made to draw a purposive, rather than a random sample of users from the categories, since the intent of the case study is to describe the use of the book rather than evaluate its use.

State 1

In State 1, 194 copies of RWR: Reading were distributed. In addition to sponsoring attendance by three SEA personnel at the regional workshop, "R&D Speaks in Reading," the SEDL/RX provided copies of the book and technical assistance in holding state workshops to the following: (1) SEA Right to Read Coordinator, for ISA Right to Read Coordinators; (2) ISA Right to Read Coordinator, for area LEAs, including principals, curriculum specialists and teachers; (3) SEDL Follow Through Program, for elementary teachers. At the request of the statewide information service, a copy of the book was sent to the service's 20 linkers located in the 20 ISAs; finally, the SEDL/RX responded to individual requests for copies of the book from individuals at the SEA, ISA, IHE, and LEA levels. The following presents the distribution of the 194 copies by the five role categories.

DISTRIBUTION IN STATE 1

SEA	15
ISA	57
LEA	49
Teachers	78
IHE	5
Total	194

Since the instances of SEA and IHE personnel receiving RWR: Reading in State 1 were relatively few, these categories were eliminated from the sample. Only ISA, LEA and Teacher populations were sampled. In order to draw a purposive sample, SEDL/RX attempted to select those people who would be likely to have used the book.

Approximately 20% (n=41) of the population was selected to be sampled from the ISA, LEA and Teacher groups. Of the 41 educators so selected, 14 could not be located for a variety of reasons; staff turnover, accounting for about half of these, and sabbatical leave, extended illness, retirement, wrong affiliation or phone number, and no return call after three trials constituting the remaining cases.

The following presents the sample by recipient group, both as originally selected and as actually contacted.

STATE 1 SAMPLE

	ISA	LEA	TEACHERS		TOTAL
Planned Sample	12	12	17	:	41
Actual Sample	7	11	9	:	27

The sample attrition rate was about 34%. While this is high, it is not surprising, since it has been two years since many of the educators first heard about RWR: Reading.

State 2

In State 2, approximately 183 copies of RWR: Reading were distributed. In addition to sponsoring attendance by three SEA

personnel at the regional workshop, "R&D Speaks in Reading," the SEDL/RX sent a large bulk mailing to the SEA. In turn, the SEA sent the book to selected SEA recipients, Right to Read field-based personnel, superintendents of schools (LEA), and deans of the schools of education at four-year public and private institutions of higher education (IHE). The SEDL/RX also provided copies of the book and technical assistance to the SEDL Follow Through Program, which in turn conducted a workshop for elementary teachers based on the book. The following is the distribution of RWR: Reading by role in State 2.

DISTRIBUTION IN STATE 2

SEA	44
ISA	0
LEA	66
Teachers	38
IHE	35
TOTAL	183

In selecting the sample for the study, it was discovered that the teacher list had suffered a great deal of attrition, and given the experience interviewing a similar set of teachers in State 1, it was decided to eliminate this set. That left SEA, LEA and IHE categories. Again there was an attempt to draw a purposive sample rather than a random one. Since most of the recipient groups received their copies through a mailing conducted by the SEA, names for the sample were selected after consultation by the SEDL/RX with the SEA.

Approximately 25% (N=44) was selected to be sampled. Twenty-nine out of these were successfuly contacted, representing an attrition

rate of 33%. The following is the sample for State 2, as planned and as actually occured.

STATE 2 SAMPLE

	SEA	LEA	IHE	TOTAL
Planned Sample	19	7	10	44
Actual Sample	16	6	7	29

State 3

In State 3, approximately 120 copies of RWR: Reading were distributed during the period in question. The SEDL/RX sponsored attendance by three SEA personnel at the regional workshop, "R&D Speaks in Reading," responded to individual requests from educators at various levels, and sent a large bulk mailing to the SEA. In turn, the SEA carried out a selected distribution within the SEA itself.

This targeted distribution began approximately six months after the R&D Speaks conference with the formation of a new state reading program within the SEA. Both the coordinator of the new program and her assistant had attended the conference. All SEA reading specialists, some language arts and English-as-a-second-language personnel, plus new employees were gathered under one umbrella to make a concerted effort to focus on reading problems and programs in the state's schools. Field positions were established as well. RWR: Reading was made a part of the inservice training for the employees of the state reading section.

The following is the distribution of the copies by role:

DISTRIBUTION IN STATE 3

SEA	113
ISA	2
Teachers	1
IHE	4
TOTAL	120

In selecting the sample, it was decided to eliminate the ISA, Teacher, and IHE categories, since these were very small. That left the SEA category, which represents three levels within the state reading program: administrators, SEA-based reading specialists, and field-based reading specialists. A total of 18 names was selected by the SEDL/RX on the advice of the SEA. Below is the sample for State 3, as planned and as actually occurred.

STATE 3 SAMPLE

Planned	18
Actual	12

The planned sample represents 15% of the total distributed (N=18). The attrition rate is 6%.

Total Actual Sample

The total actual sample for the case study shows a preponderance of SEA personnel, with the next most frequently sampled category being the LEA level.

TOTAL ACTUAL SAMPLE

	SEA	ISA	LEA	Teachers	IHE	TOTAL
State 1	0	7	11	9	0	27
State 2	16	0	6	0	7	29
State 3	12	0	0	0	0	12
TOTALS	28	7	17	9	7	68

CASE STUDY FINDINGS

Since this effort is intended as an exploratory case study, findings should be treated as tentative, subject to verification with further investigation. These findings are reported in Use of RWR: Reading; Format, Content, and Context Affecting Use, and Dissemination Strategies Affecting Use.

Use of RWR: Reading

Educators who use RWR: Reading are very enthusiastic about it. There are few indifferent users. One SEA English and Language Arts supervisor had prepared notes prior to the interview; another, an SEA Supervisor in the Bureau of Elementary Education and Project Officer for a state reading program, called the interviewer to make sure the interview took place.

RWR: Reading is used in many different ways, and most educators use it to accomplish multiple purposes, as these interview quotes illustrate:

> "As problems come up, I use the book to develop teaching techniques. I'll use the text in a newsletter, quoting examples from it. Also, in staff training and program planning in our elementary schools. When I got the book I read it, and it confirmed my ideas about reading research. Now I'm involved in improving math and communication skills in my region and I can't wait for the book on writing. I'm already using the math materials."
>
> ISA Coordinator for Basic Skills

> "I refer to the book for ideas for a class at the university. I also use the suggested readings when teachers ask me about their reading problems. And I've used the book in our regional inservice workshops for teachers."
>
> ISA Curriculum Coordinator

"I use it primarily when working with teachers in the classroom. I use a lot of quotations from the book in inservice, especially as relates to my state's minimum standards for reading which the book supports. I also use the book in speeches to teachers and parents."

SEA Supervisor of English and Language Arts

"I used it with an area reading council made up of all levels of teachers, presenting it in a way similar to the R&D Speaks conference. I followed it up with an action research approach. Part of our state reading plan allowed college professors to write up reading plans and I used the book with them, too."

SEA Supervisor for Bureau of Elementary Education and Project Office for a State Reading Program

"I use the book to design inservice workshops for our reading specialists, to design activities and objectives; I also use it like a curriculum guide. I'm revising the reading curriculum guide and using the book actively as a reference."

SEA Assistant Director, State Reading Program

Among ways of using RWR: Reading, the most prevalent are:

1. To design in-service activities for SEA, ISA and teacher levels;
2. To increase or confirm knowledge about reading instruction;
3. As a professional reference resource;
4. By recommending or giving the book to colleagues and clients;
5. As an aide in textbook selection or in preparing curriculum guides.

These are described in detail below.

1. To Design Inservice Activities for SEA, ISA and Teacher Levels

The majority of SEA, ISA and LEA staff interviewed had staff development responsibilities. They used the publication for inserivce programs aimed at SEA reading specialists, ISA Right to Read coordinators, LEA administrators, and teachers. The book is used both as a source for content and as a model for a question and answer format.

In one state the director of a newly formed state reading section, who was one of the participants at the "R&D Speaks in Reading" workshop, made RWR: Reading an integral part of staff inservice. Each member of the section--field supervisors and field representatives--received a copy of the book. They all report they use the book frequently, with the encouragement of the director. The field representatives use the information from the book to design inservice on reading for teachers. Here is what the users have to say:

> "The book provides a basis for my own staff's training. My staff then uses it in inservice with teachers. It is a constant source for my inservice design."
>
> SEA Director, State Reading Program

> "I discussed elements of the content, especially holistic teaching, with principals and teachers in our inservice training sessions."
>
> ISA Right to Read Director

> "Last summer I had a series of workshops on reading for classroom teachers and used it then."
>
> ISA Program Coordinator

> "I've used the questions in our own workshops. I had the teachers write their own answers to the questions and then compared theirs with the ones in the book."
>
> ISA Curriculum Consultant

There is some feeling, however, that the book must be adapted to be most effective with teachers. In the state reading section mentioned above, the field representatives use the book as a resource, exposing the teachers to the research summaries in the book, and applying the examples to their everyday classroom problems.

> "I needed down-to-earth classroom activities to follow-up research suggestions; that is, an expansion of the section. It's an excellent guide but I still have a lot of work to do."
>
> SEA Reading Specialist

That notion has been corroborated by some of the teachers interviewed who could not say that they had used it in the classroom. Most of the teachers mentioned it was useful as a reference, however.

The point is that RWR: Reading is not a "stand-alone" inservice tool. It cannot take the place of training, but it gives trainers a tool for staff development and for tailoring their training to their audiences.

2. To Increase or Confirm Knowledge About Reading Instruction

Many of the educators interviewed indicated that they either learned something new about reading and reading research or else RWR: Reading confirmed what they already knew or believed to be true.

> "I read it . . . and it helped me. The section on decoding and comprehension was particularly useful in answering my questions."
>
> Teacher

> "I read it. It reinforced my own teaching approach. It told me I'm on the right track."
>
> Teacher

> "It gave me the feeling that we were helping teachers because it reinforced many of our beliefs and resulting activities."
>
> SEA Reading Supervisor

Related to the book's confirming existing knowledge, there was some feeling that new staff used the book more than experienced staff.

> "New people are using the book: the experienced ones don't need it so much.
>
> SEA Reading Consultant

> "Less experienced people in reading inservice are using it more than the experienced people."
>
> SEA Reading Consultant

3. As a Professional Reference Resource

Comments such as the following explain why many of the educators interviewed reported using the book as a professional resource in answering queries from teachers and others concerning reading instruction.

"I can look at research and see what's important to classroom teachers, then relate it to improving classroom practice."
ISA Language Arts Consultant

"I use it as background information to answer questions about reading."
ISA Basic Skills Program Coordinator

"I use it as a needs assessment to determine issues and questions about reading, then when I work with teachers, I refer to it to talk about research in reading with them."
ISA Language Arts Consultant

"It's a good reference because it's research that is understandable. It brings together the isolated pieces."
ISA Reading Specialist

"The book anticipated my teachers' questions."
SEA Reading Specialist

4. By Recommending or Giving the Book to Colleagues or Clients

A large proportion of the interviewees recommended or gave the book to colleagues or their clients. The book was re-distributed in a number of ways, as exemplified by these comments.

"I circulated copies to relevant people at each of our schools."
LEA Curriculum Coordinator

"I've reproduced chapters in our newsletter. Now the book is being requested by many people."
ISA Right to Read Director

"I ordered a copy for our Reading Coordinator."
LEA Superintendent

"I've sent chapters of the book to teachers in the district."
LEA Curriculum Coordinator

"I placed it in our professional library for teachers in the district."
ISA Curriculum Consultant

"Each of my schools received a book--I made sure of that."
SEA Coordinator, Reading Section

"I've trained my (23-member) reading staff with it and they use it daily."
SEA Director, State Reading Program

5. As an Aid in Textbook Selection or in Preparing Curriculum Guides

Several of the LEA staff indicated their districts were engaged in the task of textbook selection and that the book would undoubtedly influence their selection decisions. Two said:

"We're evaluating textbooks and other classroom materials. I use the book when I'm stuck."

"Now that I have the book, I'll go back to it and read it before making my recommendations for textbooks for next year

In two additional instances, SEA staff indicated that the book had been used in writing curriculum guides.

"I'm revising the reading curriculum guide and using the book actively as a reference."
SEA Reading Specialist

"(Another supervisor) and I used it in writing the state's curriculum guide (pilot version being used this year) in language arts, K-12."
SEA Supervisor, English & Language Arts

Format, Content, and Context Affecting Use

Factors influencing the use of RWR: Reading were considered in two clusters: (1) those related to the characteristics of the product, its content and format, and (2) those related to the recipient's or the organization's context for seeking research information. Factors related to the manner in which the product was disseminated are discussed in the section which follows.

1. Characteristics of the Product

Several characteristics of the product were noted by users as helpful or important. These include content, sound research base, format, cost, and method of development.

Content

In discussing content, respondents indicated not only what they liked about the product, but what additional information they felt it needed. Here's what was singled out as useful in the content.

> "I especially use the material on comprehension, acquisition skills, Black English, and comments on testing skills."
>
> SEA Supervisor, English and Language Arts

> "People who use it the most are the people interested in the comprehension area."
>
> SEA Reading Consultant

Mention has already been made that two interviewees suggested that new staff members used the book more than experienced ones. In addition, the book was felt to be inappropriate for secondary reading specialists.

Several respondents had good suggestions about content which could be added to the book:

"There's not too much on the readiness subject. Also, I need questions on bilingual reading."
Teacher

"The book lacks a rural focus. In many farming communities there are no outside resources like libraries, factories, parades which would help teach language development."
SEA Reading Consultant

"The book needs material on how to work with parents regarding the reading skills of their children."
SEA Reading Consultant

"The book needs material on attitutdes and on testing which measures attitudes."
SEA Reading Consultant

"Needs something about reading in content areas, motiviation with older students, self-concept as related to reading achievement, listening skills, summary of reasearch on creating individualized programs as opposed to group work, comparison of a phonics approach to other approaches, programs fitted toward learning styles, reading programs for gifted, classroom management, inservice."
SEA Director, State Reading Program

It has already been mentioned that to be effective with most teachers, the book would need specific activities they can carry out in the classroom.

Sound Research Base

The sound research base of the book was commented on by many of the respondents. They felt that the product conveys information that is credible and current.

"I need to know valid answers."
SEA Reading Consultant

"I trust the results of this book because it is research based."
SEA Reading Specialist

"I believe in research and I put a value on it. This book uses what I know of research. It's credible."
LEA Reading Supervisor

"The book suggested readings to substantiate its points. I felt it was well researched and current, and well-known research was illustrated."

. LEA Curriculum Coordinator

A few of the SEA reading specialists appear to have been intimidated at first by the research aspect of the book; however, the book's clear language and case history seem to have overcome this initial reluctance.

Format

The format of RWR: Reading was felt to be a useable one by the educators. Comments on format relate to the question-and-answer form, the non-technical language, the organization of topics, the book's size, the type selected, the cost. The following illustrates:

"Research is usually full of jargon. This did an excellent job of presenting research in a readable, palatable form."

LEA Staff Development Specialist

"It's understandable and direct. I don't like long narratives."

Teacher

"Research was put into a format I could use with teachers right away. Most research isn't."

ISA Curriculum Specialist

"The summaries are excellent. I would read them first or look in the Table of Contents and then go to the summary I wanted, check it out and read the whole thing if I wanted to."

LEA Curriculum Coordinator

"The question-and-answer format is nice. It's concise and to the point."

LEA Curriculum Coordinator

"Even the titles were succinct and subject-oriented. It's visually good, even the type size and pagination."

LEA Staff Development Specialist

"It's easy to carry and wasn't too long so that you might say 'I'll never finish that.'"

SEA Assistant Coordinator State Reading Program

"I like the research but I like personal experience stories, too."
SEA Reading Consultant

"I like large print."
SEA Reading Consultant

"A good print size, readable. The answers are short, and that's a plus."
Supervisor, Bureau of Elementary Education and Project Officer, State Reading Plan

"It is compact and good for xeroxing two pages at a time."
LEA Curriculum Coordinator

"The book is easy to store but handy to keep on the desk. It always finds its way to the top of the pile."
ISA Project Manager

"It's non-threatening. All research should be packaged in smaller sizes."
LEA Program Coordinator

Cost

"It's inexpensive. I could afford to order a lot of copies."
LEA Curriculum Coordinator

"I got copies for people without any cost. It's a gold mine."
ISA Right to Read Coordinator

Development of the Product

One aspect about the way in which RWR: Reading was developed was singled out as an important attribute of the product. The fact that it was teachers who proposed the questions which guided the responses from research was felt to increase the credibility and relevance of the product to teachers and to their concerns. Those respondents who did know how the book was developed were not influenced by the fact in their use.

"It is really important they asked teachers and not administrators."
Teacher

"This fact gives it credibility to teachers. Teachers are more inclined to use it knowing other teachers were involved in the development."
ISA Right to Read Director

"This insures it gets at the grass roots. It takes research out of the ivory tower."
LEA Reading Coordinator

2. Organizational and Professional Factors

Respondents generally expressed the view that while RWR: Reading is a useful document, it was particularly helpful in instances where the respondent or the organization was searching for research information to help in program planning and development. In several cases, the publication was seen as satisfying job demands. The most significant instance, mentioned earlier, was the beginning of a new state reading program and the use of the document throughout the program by administrators training their personnel and by the personnel using the document to train teachers.

"It's my job to be up on what's going on."
ISA Language Arts Consultant

"At that time, I was looking for information on reading instruction, and information based on research was important."
LEA Reading Coordinator

"My job is to help teachers develop materials, so I'm always looking."
LEA Staff Development Specialist

"The categories addressed were immediately relevant to my job."
ISA Curriculum Coordinator

In other instances, the organization also had reading as a priority concern. For example.

"Our districts are currently thinking about improving reading and the book was right there."
ISA Program Coordinator

"Basic skills in a priority in our state and we're always looking for resources to help meet these problems."
LEA Curriculum Coordinator

Thus, professional impetus as well as organizational push to improve practices in reading offered the context in which use of RWR: Reading was more prevalent.

Dissemination Strategies Affecting Use

Dissemination strategies, particularly as they coincide with personal and organizational contexts for information, stimulate and influence the use of RWR: Reading. Factors operative in dissemination strategies include how the product was received, from whom it was received, who received it, and the time it was received. In other words, for the product to be used at its fullest, the right person needs to receive the book at the right time and in the right manner! Information about how dissemination strategies affected the use of RWR: Reading was found not only in the responses to the specific interview questions, but also in the process of drawing the sample.

The following four dissemination strategies were in effect in the SEDL/RX region:

1. Regional Conference, "R&D Speaks in Reading"
2. State Workshops
3. Inservice Workshops
4. Direct Mail:
    a. Solicited Bulk Batches
    b. Solicited Single or Limited Copies
    c. Unsolicited Single Copies

A workshop or conference setting, in which the book is discussed by participants, appears to be the most effective dissemination strategy. Out of the ten persons attending the SEDL/RX conference,

"R&D Speaks in Reading," from the three states sampled, seven went on to train others to use the book, either by putting on their own workshops or by making the book part of a regular staff development program. Here is what SEA and ISA respondents said about the workshop approach:

> "A workshop calls your attention to the material and gives you time to review it."
> SEA Assistant Coordinator, Reading Program

> "I learned about it in a staff development meeting,"
> SEA Reading Consultant

> "I may not have seen the benefit of the book without the conference in Austin."
> ISA Program Coordinator

> "Going over the book at the workshop was very useful."
> ISA Curriculum Consultant

> "It would not have been as helpful if it were just sent out."
> ISA Language Arts Consultant

> "The SEA sent it to us in a packet. A workshop would have been more useful."
> SEA Reading Consultant

Who disseminates the book is also very important. Several respondents indicated that they were influenced by the recommendation of the book by someone who opinions they trust. The support and enthusiasm of a director is critical to a staff's acceptance of the book.

> "When you get it from your boss, you read it,"
> SEA Reading Consultant

> "It was highly recommended by the director of the section."
> SEA Reading Consultant

In the SEA in which the book has become a part of the state reading program, every person contacted agreed to be interviewed and is

enthusiastically using the book. In a couple of instances respondents received a copy of the book from a highly respected state information service and reported that influenced their use.

Other respondents took the initiative of securing the book from the SEDL/RX or their regional ISA once they learned it was available. They felt that ordering the book themselves influenced their predisposition to use it.

A workshop is not the complete answer, however; it has to be an effective workshop and be targeted at the right people. A large majority of those reporting that they used RWR: Reading have inservice responsibilities. Most of the teachers sampled--who have no inservice responsibilities and who received the book at inservice workshops--did not appear to be using the book, though they said they valued it as a reference. As one teacher said, "The book was one of another hundred books on reading," which she had received. There was some indication as well that dissemination works best when the entire department is briefed on the book. "Better if the whole department had had an orientation regarding the book first," was how one SEA Reading Supervisor put it.

In terms of the best time to receive the document, respondents indicated that late spring or summer was best:

"Best to receive things in late Spring, March or April."
SEA Director, State Reading Program

"Best to receive material in May or June."
SEA Reading Supervisor

"I received the book in September from the State Reading Section Supervisor. In June would have been better."
SEA Reading Consultant

"It's important to receive things toward the end of the summer."
SEA Coordinator, State Reading Section

But sometimes it simply takes a little time to begin using a document:

"I used the book much later after the conference."
SEA Supervisor, Bureau of Elementary Education and Project Officer, State Reading Plan

Unsolicited direct mail was another major strategy sampled in the study. From the responses, it appears that unless the recipient is highly motivated to use the book--either because it has been recommended or because it clearly meets that person's needs right away--unsolicited direct mail is not a very effective distribution strategy. In one state, where unsolicited direct mail recipients included deans of colleges of education and superintendents of schools, not one out of the 12 sampled remembered receiving the book. Their interviews were immediately terminated. While it is easy to understand how deans and superintendents, who do not have direct responsibility for conducting inservice, might not use the book or remember receiving it, it is reasonable to expect a better response rate from SEA recipients. However, out of the 16 SEA recipients sampled representing heads of departments and reading specialists who were sent the book via direct mail--only six remembered receiving it. Out of these, two had forwarded the book to someone else and one said she received the book from another source, leaving only four to be interviewed.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Certain tentative findings can be reported, based upon a total of 68 interviews conducted with persons representing SEA, ISA, LEA, teachers and IHE levels. The following number of interviews were conducted with each of the levels:

SEA	ISA	LEA	Teachers	IHE
28	7	17	9	7

The summary is divided into three sections, corresponding to the "Case Study Findings": (1) Use of RWR: Reading; (2) Format, Content, and Context Affecting Use; and (3) Dissemination Strategies Affecting Use.

Use of RWR: Reading

The primary users of the publication are SEA and ISA persons with inservice responsibilities. The book appears to be a very effective tool for staff development. Multiple uses were reported by respondents, as follows:

1. To design in-service activities for SEA, ISA and Teacher levels;
2. To increase or confirm knowledge about reading instruction;
3. As a professional reference resource;
4. By recommending or giving the book to colleagues and clients;
5. As an aid in textbook selection or in preparing curriculum guides.

Format, Content, and Context Affecting Use

1. Characteristics of the Product

Four characteristics appeared to have positively influenced the use of RWR: Reading. According to respondents, they are:

a. Content: information on comprehension, acquisition of skills, Black English, testing skills;

b. Sound research base: this resulted in credible and current information;

c. Format: question-and-answer form, non-technical language, organization by topics, size of book, readable type, and cost of book;

d. Product development: respondents were impressed that teachers were used as a source of questions to be answered by research.

2. Organizational and Professional Factors

RWR: Reading was perceived to be particularly helpful when the individual or the organization had placed top priority on reading, as the following three reasons, reported by respondents, illustrate:

a. The respondent or the organization was searching for research information to help in program planning and development;

b. The information in the book appeared to satisfy job demands;

c. The book was made an integral part of a state level reading program.

Dissemination Strategies Affecting Use

Four dissemination strategies were used in the SEDL/RX region:

1. Regional Conference
2. State Workshops
3. Inservice Workshops
4. Direct Mail
    a. Solicited Bulk Batches
    b. Solicited Single or Limited Copies
    c. Unsolicited Single Copies

A dissemination strategy includes not only the manner in which the product was presented, but also who presents it, who it was sent to, and the time it was received. The aspects can be expressed thusly:

- Presentation Method
- Sender
- Recipient
- Timing

When a dissemination strategy coincides with personal and organizational contexts which motivate use, recipients are more likely to use the book. From the data generated by the interviews, some tentative conclusions may be made about the most effective dissemination strategies. These are expressed on the next page in the form of a chart.

DISSEMINATION STRATEGIES AFFECTING USE

Aspects of Dissemination	Most Effective	Least Effective
Presentation Method	1. Workshop or conference	1. Direct Mail: Unsolicited Single Copy
	2. Direct Mail: Solicited Copy (at recipient's request)	
Sender	1. Supervisor	1. Little-known or unknown sender
	2. Trusted institution or individual	
Recipient	1. SEA or ISA personnel with inservice responsibilities	1. Persons without inservice responsibilities: Deans of Colleges of Education, Superintendents, Teachers
Timing	1. Late Spring or Summer	1. During the school year

IMPLICATIONS

From these tentative findings, several implications can be drawn with respect to (1) the design and development of future products in the RWR series, (2) strategies to be employed for disseminating similar products in the future, and (3) planning for future case studies.

Product Development

Educational practitioners have perhaps a better understanding and appreciation for research and research-based information than anticipated or believed to be true. Since RWR: Reading synthesizes and interprets current research findings, it appears to distinguish itself from other materials currently available. This case study strongly suggests the need for research-based information which is presented in clear and understandable language.

In using research-based information, educators appear to appreciate short and succinct presentations, expressed in jargon-free language and packaged in small and low cost book form.

Furthermore, educators particularly appreciate the fact that classroom teachers were the sources for identifying concerns related to teaching reading. This aspect of the product lends itself to the belief that the "real" instructional concerns are being addressed by research.

Several key attributed of RWR: Reading were highly rated by users: the research base, the clear and readable language, the short and easy to use format, the use of classroom teachers for identifying instructional concerns. This suggests that in developing future products in the RWR series, care should be taken to preserve these attributes.

Recipients, as is clear from the next section on dissemination strategies, play a key role in the effectiveness of a product. It is important to define the audience before developing a document, and it might prove wise to have at least one member of that audience review the book before it goes to press.

Dissemination Strategies

The evidence suggests that dissemination strategies must be chosen with an eye to how the product was presented, who presents it, who receives it, and the time it is sent. All these appear to influence the motivation to use the book.

In the case of a product like RWR: Reading; the most effective dissemination strategy would be a conference or workshop (either in-house or for a client group), in which the recipients are chosen because they have inservice responsibilities directly related to the topic of the book. Because they offer the opportunity for more interaction between user and product, conferences and workshops appear to produce the highest incidence of use. Furthermore, those that focus on the product, rather than presenting it as one of many resources on a particular topic, offer more opportunity for in-depth discussion, and thus result in increased use.

Since motivation to use the book is so important, the target audiences should be selected carefully and analyzed or described to the point that they are definite, limited, and describable. Recipients should be the ones who actually have a use for the book as it was developed. In the case of RWR: Reading, those who used the book had inservice responsibilities in the area of reading or language arts. If recipients have no use for the book, the time spent in sending it to them or presenting it to them may very well be wasted.

Who introduces the book to the recipient is also important: it should come from someone or some institution which the recipient values or trusts, or from a supervisor, so that it is tied directly to job performance. In the future, it might be cost-effective to target dissemination of products such as RWR: Reading to supervisory or coordinating personnel with responsibilities related to the book's topic. A linker system could be developed, perhaps, in which people influential to the particular target audience agree to commit the time and effort required to share the book with others effectively.

Non-interactive strategies are the least productive dissemination approach, on the whole. Direct mail really only works when recipients have requested the book, unless for some reason the recipient is already highly motivated to use the book. Generally speaking, unsolicited direct mail is very ineffective.

Future Case Studies

Future efforts in describing the use of the Research Within Reach series should continue to focus on the relationship between dissemination strategies and use. Additional samples need to be collected based on dissemination strategies as well as functional roles and categories of recipients.

Future studies also need to consider what the optimal elapsed time should be between exposure to the publication and queries to determine use. In this case it was difficult for some respondents to recall events which occurred two years ago. A more appropriate time frame may be six to twelve months. In addition, the case study suffered a large sample attrition (34%). This attrition rate can be somewhat reduced if accurate and current listings of recipients are maintained.

This case study is intended as an exploratory effort. From it we can conclude that the telephone interview approach, using the kind of protocol developed for the study, is a feasible data collection method. Case studies in other states and in other regions are recommended. These will no doubt result in increased understanding of the use of the Research Within Reach series.

SOUTHWEST EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY
211 E. Seventh Steet
Austin, Texas 78701
512/476-6861

The Regional Exchange at Southwest Educational Development Labortory (SEDL/RX) is one of eight regional exchanges and four central support services which comprise the Research & Development Exchange (RDx) supported by the National Institute of Education. The RDx, begun in October 1976, has four broad goals:

- To promote coordination among dissemination and school improvement programs.
- To promote the use of R&D outcomes that support dissemination and school improvement efforts.
- To provide information, technical assistance, and/or training which support dissemination and school improvement efforts.
- To increase shared understanding and use of information about client needs to order to influence R&D outcomes.

The regional exchanges in the RDx act as extended "arms" of the network, each serving a set of states which make up their region. The eight regional exchanges (known as RX's) are:

- AEL/RX — Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Charleston WV
- CEMREL/RX — CEMREL, Inc., St. Louis MO
- McREL/RX — Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory, Kansas City KA
- NE/RX — Northeast Regional Exchange, Merimack Education Center, Chelmsford MA
- NWREL/RX — Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland OR
- RBS/RX — Research for Better Schools, Philadelphia PA
- SEDL/RX — Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Austin TX
- SWRL/RX — Southwest Regional Laboratory, Los Alamitos CA

The four central support services, which serve the entire RDx in their respective areas of expertise, are:

- RDIS — Research & Development Interpretation Services, CEMREL, Inc.
- RRS — Research & Referral Service, Ohio State University, Columbus OH
- SSS — System Support Service, Far West Laboratory, San Francisco CA
- DSS — Dissemination Support Service, Northwest Regional Laboratory

The SEDL Regional Exchange (SEDL/RX) provides information and technical assistance services to the six states in its region. It directly serves and is guided by an Advisory Board composed of designated SEA and ROEP VI participants. For further information contact the Advisory Board member from your State Department of Education, the ROEP VI, or the Director of the SEDL/RX, Dr. Preston C. Kronkosky. The Advisory Board members are:

Arkansas	Sara Murphy	501/370-5036
Louisiana	Sue Wilson	504/342-4268
Mississippi	Jimmy Jones	601/354-7329
New Mexico	Dolores Dietz	505/827-5441
Oklahoma	Jack Craddock	405/521-3331
Texas	Marj Wightman	512/475-5601
ROEP VI	John Damron	214/767-3651

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